WRONG NUMBER
Right Feelings

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Chapter 1: The Wrong Message That Felt Right

In the country of Dravia, people believed emotions should be private — delicate like cherry blossoms, never loud like thunder.

But Jin-hai?
Jin-hai didn’t care about quiet rules.
It was dramatic. Lovely. A little chaotic. And absolutely unforgettable.

In Jin-hai, the air smelled like old poetry and roasted chestnuts. Street musicians played love songs in the rain. Shrines whispered secrets at night. You could fall in love in a teacup or get heartbroken under a lantern festival. It was that kind of place.

And hidden in a small district full of bookstores and rooftops that caught the sunset perfectly, lived the Tachibana family — a middle-class household full of drama, food smells, and twin energy.

Eighteen years ago, Rinne Tachibana, graceful and dramatic in all the best ways, gave birth to twins.

The first arrived like a thunderstorm: yelling, kicking, wild.
They named her Yūga — and she basically punched life in the face from the start.

The second arrived like a sunrise: quiet, wide-eyed, holding her mother’s hand softly.
They named her Yūhi — and the nurses swore they felt calm just by looking at her.

Now 18 years old, the twins were still complete opposites.

Yūhi Tachibana was warm, soft-spoken, beautiful without trying, and known for her calming presence. She wore pastel sweaters, helped lost kids find their way, and somehow smiled at everything without being fake.

Yūga Tachibana was leather boots, sarcasm, scraped knuckles, and "don’t talk to me unless you want to fight." She had loyal enemies, annoyed teachers, and was secretly very soft for her sister — not that she'd ever admit it.

They went to different colleges but came home to the same roof. Their mom said it was “like living with a sunflower and a black cat.”

That evening, Yūhi lay in her room, surrounded by glitter pens and festival notes. Her college’s cultural festival was near, and she was planning her booth with her best friend Hana Saeki — a loud, classy, dramatic genius who once declared herself “President of the Universe.”

After organizing everything, Yūhi texted Hana to confirm their meeting:

"Hey~ I ready everything! Come to Lunar Café, Table 3. Tomorrow at 5 PM. Okay? Please come 🥺💖"

She smiled and hit send.
Except…
She didn't know she'd typed the wrong number.

Meanwhile, in a quiet ivy-covered guesthouse on the edge of Jin-hai, Lucian Wujin sat on a couch, flipping through a science magazine. He wore a black hoodie, headphones around his neck, and an expression like he hadn't smiled in three years.

Three weeks ago, Lucian had come to Jin-hai from Neo Alexandria, capital of the United States of Nexis, with his mother, Emma Wu Jin, for his aunt's funeral.

Now, he was staying temporarily. Quietly. Unbothered. Alone — just the way he liked it.

Well… almost.

Because his cousin, Ren Viktor, was here too.
And Ren was chaos in jeans.

Currently, Ren was spinning in a chair, eating chips loudly, and ranting about cereal.

"I'm just saying," Ren declared, "cereal before milk is science. But cereal after milk? That's criminal. I will fight people."

Lucian: "Go fight yourself. You already lost."

Ren gasped. "Ohhh the hoodie strikes again!"

Then Lucian's phone buzzed. He checked it.

Unknown number.

"Hey~ I ready everything! Come to Lunar Café, Table 3. Tomorrow at 5 PM. Okay? Please come 🥺💖"

Lucian blinked.

Ren leaned in like a detective who found the murder weapon.

“Hold. Up. Is that a girl texting you?? With a begging emoji?? Bro, is this a love confession?! In this house?! You?!”

Lucian: “It’s a wrong number.”

Ren: “No. It’s DESTINY, bro! This is your moment! Two strangers. One text. A romantic café table. A love story begins. Cue K-drama music!”

Lucian: “Delete it.”

Ren snatched the phone away. “No! This is the first time in 17 years that a girl has texted you without being forced at gunpoint. We are honoring this moment.”

Lucian sighed. “Give it back.”

Ren held it above his head. “Only if you admit you’re intrigued.”

Lucian: “I’m not.”

Ren: “You’re blinking slower. That’s your curious face.”

Lucian: “You need professional help.”

Ren: “And YOU need to text her back before she cries and writes a diary entry about the mysterious guy who ghosted her.”

Lucian rolled his eyes.

“Fine,” he said calmly. “Just so she knows it’s the wrong person.”

Ren gasped. “You’re typing. Oh my god. You’re texting a human being. Is this... character development?”

Lucian sent a short message:

“Who is this?”

Ren fell off the couch. “AND HE SPEAKS.”

Lucian sat back.

Ren clutched his chest. “This is it. The birth of a legend. The hoodie prince of logic... just got invited to Lunar Café by mistake.”

Lucian tried to ignore him, but a small, strange feeling stayed in his chest.

Warm. Curious. Familiar.

He didn't know who sent that message.
But something about it… felt like the start of something.

Back in her room, Yūhi continued cutting colored papers for the festival. She thought Hana would reply soon.

She had no idea.
Tomorrow at 5 PM… someone else would be waiting.

And in a city like Jin-hai, no meeting was ever just an accident.

Chapter 2: Lunar Café Collision

Lucian Wujin stared at the message again.

Hey I ready everything. Come to Lunar Café, table 3, tomorrow evening 5 PM, okay? Please come.

A soft, slightly clumsy, hopeful text. From a number he didn't recognize.

Wrong number. End of story.

He clicked his phone off. "I'm not going."

Across the room, Ren Vektor was lying upside down on the couch like a tragic anime prince who'd lost all will to live. He tossed popcorn into the air. None of it landed in his mouth.

"C'monnnnn. One café. One table. One girl. One opportunity to accidentally fall in love and write tragic piano music."

Lucian shot him a dry look. "I'm not a K-drama character."

Ren rolled over, dramatically crawled like a dying gremlin across the floor, and grabbed Lucian's pant leg. "Exactly. You're worse. You're a hoodie-wearing robot who probably dreams in binary. So, for once in your sad, spreadsheety scientist life, do something irrational."

Lucian raised an eyebrow. "No."

Ren widened his eyes. "Do it... for me?"

Lucian stared at him.

Ren's hands formed a pleading heart over his chest. "For the sake of this dumb cousin who buys you socks every winter."

Lucian sighed. The Ren Effect™ had worked again.

5:00 PM — Lunar Café

Lucian arrived before the girl. Ren, who was trailing behind like a spy trained by YouTube tutorials, nearly choked on his gum.

Lucian actually dressed up.
Black pants. Formal coat. Collared shirt.
Clean-cut. Calm. Sitting like a character who just walked out of a noir film.
Storm-gray eyes calm — but his heart? Not so much.

He sat at Table 3. Back straight. Confident. Confused.

Behind a bushy indoor plant, Ren whispered into a straw like it was a mic:

"Target is in position. Waiting for romantic chaos. Over."

And then — she walked in.

Yūhi Tachibana.

Her soft hair tucked behind her ear. A notebook hugged to her chest like armor. Wearing a light blue dress that matched her nervous eyes. She stepped into the café, looked around, and paused.

Their eyes locked.

Time froze.
Heartbeats? Doubled.
Reality? Blurred.

She walked toward the table. Swallowed the panic rising in her throat. Her hands shook a little as she stepped forward, standing right in front of him.

"…Um… s-sir? I already booked this table."

Lucian blinked. Slowly. Calmly. Then…

"I know. You texted me last night."

Yūhi's soul left her body for a full second.
"Wait… what?"

Lucian tilted his head slightly. "I'm guessing you meant someone else. But I decided to come anyway."

Somewhere behind a giant plastic fern, Ren accidentally knocked over a waiter's glass.

Yūhi's entire face turned pink. "Oh no... no no no. This is SO embarrassing—I meant to message my friend Hana—oh my goodness—"

Lucian let out a tiny chuckle. "Relax. You didn't summon a stalker. Just a stranger with too much free time."

She covered her face. "This is the most humiliating moment of my entire existence."

Lucian (sipping water): "Could be worse. You could've called me 'Sweetie Pumpkin' or something."

Yūhi (muffled behind hands): "...I almost did."

They both laughed.

Lucian gestured toward the opposite chair. "Well, since we're both already here... want to eat together? Unless you're too embarrassed to chew."

Yūhi hesitated. Then smiled shyly. "Okay. But only because I'm too hungry to cry."

They ordered noodles, bubble tea, and something spicy Lucian failed to pronounce. And then...

The conversation just flowed.

Yūhi: "So… what's your name, mysterious wrong-number man with serious eyes?"

Lucian: "Lucian Wujin."

Yūhi: "Wujin? Sounds foreign."

Lucian: "Half-Dravian. Half-USN."

Yūhi: "Ohh… I'm Yūhi Tachibana."

Lucian raised an eyebrow. "Yūhi. That's a sunrise name."

She blinked. "Huh?"

He leaned forward a little. "Yūhi. Sunset glow. It suits your vibe."

Yūhi immediately forgot how to breathe.

"D-do you always flirt like a ninja?"

Lucian (deadpan): “I’m trying it for the first time. You tell me if it’s working.”

From behind the plant, Ren silently screamed into a paper napkin.

They talked about school. Books. How Yūhi was prepping for the festival.
Lucian listened to every word like she was giving a scientific lecture on how to be adorable.

Yūhi nervously played with her straw. “This is... weird, right?”

Lucian looked at her for a long second. “A little. But also... not bad.”

They both smiled. And somehow, the table didn’t feel awkward anymore.

As they finished, Yūhi stood first, bowing slightly. “Thank you for being... um... weirdly kind. And sorry again for the wrong-number ambush.”

Lucian stood too. “It’s fine. You made today... less boring.”

She gave a tiny wave and turned to leave.

Lucian watched her walk out through the glass doors, sunlight bouncing off her hair like a goodbye shimmer.

Then softly whispered:

“Miss Yūhi...”

Pause.

“What... was that?”

Ren suddenly popped up like a horror movie jump scare.

“I KNEW IT! YOU FELL! YOU—MY MAN—ARE DOOMED!”

Lucian glared at him. “I didn’t fall.”

Ren leaned in smugly. “You called her Miss Yūhi. That’s romantic level 4.5.”

Lucian sighed. “Shut up.”

Meanwhile, Yūhi rushed home, heart pounding. She didn’t talk to anyone.
Went straight into her room. Shut the door. Dropped her bag.
Collapsed face-first on the bed.

Whispered to herself:

“What... was THAT?!”

Her cheeks were still burning. Her fingers still shaking.

And her heart? Still not slowing down.

Chapter 3: What Was That?!

The soft click of the door barely registered in the house before chaos made itself known.

Daigo Tachibana was already mid-explosion in the hallway, his voice sharp with fatherly fury.

"YŪGA! I swear, if I get one more call about your FISTS doing the talking—"

Yūga, cool as frostbite, leaned against the wall, arms crossed, the poster child of zero guilt.

"He called me sweetheart, Dad. I was kind enough to let him leave with his teeth."

Daigo sputtered, caught between parenting and pure disbelief.

At that moment, Yūhi slipped in through the door like a soft breeze.

Face flushed. Movements light. Like someone floating through a dream they didn't understand.

Yūga caught sight of her sister, gave a casual wave.
Yūhi blinked. Half-smiled. Then kept walking.

Straight to her room.

Didn't even glance at them twice.

Yūga's smirk dropped. She knew something was up.

Inside Yūhi's Room

She shut the door gently behind her, kicked off her shoes, dropped her bag—and melted into the bed.

"What… was that…?"

The words slipped from her lips like a secret she couldn't keep.

Images of the café flashed through her mind.

His voice. His eyes. The way he said her name like it was something made of sunlight.

Her face went crimson.

Just then—

"What was what?"

"AAAH!"

Yūhi launched off the bed like a startled cat. Spun around.

Yūga was standing there. Cool. Silent. Staring.

"Relax, ghost-hunter. It's just me."

Yūhi clutched her heart. "Don't sneak in like that!"

Yūga walked over and dropped beside her like she owned the bed. "So. What happened?"

Yūhi's breath caught.

Yūga narrowed her eyes. "You went to meet Hana. Did you fight? Did someone bother you? Just say the word. I'll fix it—with a black eye."

Yūhi shook her head. Tried to speak. But no words came out.

"Then what is it?"

A long silence.

Then finally:

"I… I just want to sleep."

She turned over, back facing her sister.

Yūga stared at her. Quiet. Suspicious.

Then stood up without a word.

Her eyes landed on the phone. Unlocked. Open.

She picked it up with quiet fingers, scanning briefly.

A smirk tugged at her lips.

“So it wasn’t Hana…”

She tucked the phone under her arm and left without another word.

Alone again, Yūhi slowly opened her eyes.

“Why is my heart still beating like that?”

She sat up, whispering to herself.

“I… talked to him.”

“Wrong number. Wrong table. Wrong person.”

“But… it felt right.”

She picked up a pillow, buried her face, and groaned.

“Ugh, why did he have to be that handsome...”

Then she whispered one more thing. Soft. Honest.

“Lucian… why can’t I forget your name?”

Chapter 4: Sunset, Sunrise, Secrets

Midnight hung heavily over the Tachibana household. The world outside Jin-hai lay in its soft drizzle, streets washed in golden rainlight.

Inside—two girls, two rooms, one storm.

Yūhi couldn't sleep. She didn't even try.

Her hand had reached for her phone at least twenty times before she remembered she no longer had it. She didn't know where it went. Maybe it vanished like dreams. Or like him.

Lucian Wujin.

She kept whispering it under her breath, like a secret spell, a quiet confession. The air still held his scent. Her cheeks still held the heat. And her heart... was somewhere still seated at Table 3.

She turned on her bed. And turned again. Eyes open. Breath shallow.

She missed her phone, yes.

But she missed that voice more.

In the room next door, Yūga crouched on the floor like a military strategist over a battle map. Except this battle was a black-locked phone.

Her twin's phone.

"Password incorrect," it blinked.

She tried again.

Bubbleteaqueen? Yugaiscool? Pancakelover?

"Ugh, you're worse than me," Yūga muttered, rolling onto her back. Her knuckles grazed her forehead.

"What are you hiding, Yūhi?"

She stared at the locked screen, suspicion growing like a wildfire.

Far across the city, under a different rooftop, Lucian sat with one leg propped on the edge of the balcony. The cool wind brushed his face, but he didn't feel it.

His fingers hovered over his phone. His screen was dark, but he kept staring at it like it held a heartbeat.

One name danced in his mind like candlelight: Yūhi.

Morning.

"Where IS it?!"

Yūhi nearly flipped her bed over in panic. Pillows flew. Blankets fell. Her room became a battlefield of worry.

"My phone... it's not here… I didn't dream that day, right?"

She sprinted to the door, nearly colliding with her mother.

Rinne crossed her arms, blocking the exit like a final boss.

"And where are you running to this early?"

Yūhi blinked. "Um… the cafe. I mean, school. I mean—"

"You're acting strange."

"It's... exam season?"

Her mother didn't buy it, but Yūhi escaped anyway.

But Lunar Café gave no answers.

The waitress recognized her, smiled warmly, even offered extra sugar in her tea. But there was no phone. No Lucian. No clue.

Meanwhile...

“Password?”

“Why do you need Yūhi’s password?” Hana asked, side-eyeing Yūga.

Yūga leaned against her locker, arms crossed. “She owes me. And I’m collecting in the form of digital secrets.”

Hana giggled. “I don’t even know it. I bet it's some soft poetic nonsense like... 'sunlightbutterflydream'.”

Yūga groaned.

One week.

No phone. No answers. No peace.

Lucian sat silently in the Wujin apartment. Same chair. Same hoodie. Same dark stare.

Ren peeked around the corner.

“Let me guess. Still waiting for Miss BubbleText?”

Lucian didn’t flinch.

Ren strutted in dramatically. “My dear cousin… you’re in love.”

Lucian: “I’m not.”

Ren: “Oh? Then why did you just refresh your inbox like it was oxygen?”

Lucian said nothing.

Ren tossed him a coat. “Come. Jin-hai awaits. Let’s reset your brain.”

They walked through bookstores, alleys, street fairs.

But no matter where Lucian looked—her shadow followed.

Back at the house, Yūhi stirred her tea with lifeless hands.

Yūga dropped beside her, casual as ever.

“You haven’t answered any of my calls. I called like five times.”

Yūhi blinked. “I lost my phone...”

Yūga raised an eyebrow. “You what?”

“A week ago. I think I left it at the café.”

Yūga smiled slowly. Suspiciously.

“Well then. If only someone had your cheesy little password, they could track it.”

Yūhi’s eyes lit up. “Really?! It’s 'sunset sunrise'!”

Yūga's face froze. Then cracked into disbelief.

“...SUNSET SUNRISE?” she cackled. “Seriously? You rom-com cupcake.”

Yūhi blushed hard. “SHUT UP.”

“Nope. I’m going to find that phone and unlock your dramatic romance.”

Yūga marched to the garden, sat under a tree, and entered the password.

Unlocked.

The home screen blinked to life. Messages. One name at the top:

Lucian Wujin.

Yūga smirked. “Bingo.”

Chapter 5: Cherry Blossoms and Punchlines

Yūga Tachibana stood in the garden, staring at the unlocked phone screen. Her smirk widened.

"Lucian Wujin... so you're the one, huh," she muttered, rolling her eyes.

Meanwhile, inside the house, Yūhi was hugging a pillow, kicking her feet slightly. Her soft voice whispered, "I know she'll find it… she always does."

Across Jin-hai, Lucian sat silently in the bench of garden, staring at nothing. Then he softly spoke: "Miss Yūhi…"

Ren, who was juggling snacks in the background, paused. "You've been whispering her name for a whole week. Admit it — you're in love."

Lucian scoffed. "No, I'm just…"

"Thinking about her smile? Her awkward texts? The way she held her notebook like it was sacred? Yeah, yeah, totally not love."

Their usual banter was interrupted by Lucian's phone buzzing.

Yūhi Tachibana — Calling.

Lucian froze. His heart skipped.

He quickly answered, "H-Hello? Miss Yūhi?"

But the voice was different.

"Where are you right now?" Yūga's voice demanded.

Lucian blinked. "Sorry? Why are you asking? Miss Yūhi?"

Ren, nosy as ever, yelled loud enough for the speaker to catch, "Cherry Blossom Garden! The flowers here are beautiful, right, Lucian?"

Just then, the faint sound of a motorcycle roared through the phone.

The call cut.

Lucian glared at Ren. "WHY would you say that?!"

Ren shrugged. "You're welcome. Your love story needs chaos."

Five minutes later, the same roaring sound returned — in real life.

They turned. A sleek black bike rolled into the garden.

Yūhi? No… not quite.

Lucian and Ren blinked in disbelief as the soft-hearted girl from Lunar Café removed her helmet — with an ice-cold glare.

Yūga Tachibana.

Ren immediately dove behind a tree.

She strutted over to Lucian, each step louder than his heartbeat. He stumbled back onto a bench.

"Which one of you is Lucian?" she asked with deadly calm.

Ren poked from behind the tree, pointed to Lucian, and mouthed, "Sorry bro."

Lucian raised a hand awkwardly. "I… am."

Before he could speak more, she grabbed his collar and raised a fist. He shut his eyes — then opened them to find her punch hit the bench beside him instead.

"Wh-What… you're not Yūhi."

"Nope."

She leaned close. "What happened at Lunar Café?"

Shaken, Lucian quickly explained everything — the text, the meeting, the noodles, the conversation.

She studied his face, then slowly let go of his collar.

"Huh. So you really met by mistake."

He nodded.

"Do you love her?"

His mouth said, "No." But his brain betrayed him.

"I… I think I started falling for her. I'm not sure yet."

He turned bright red.

Yūga raised an eyebrow, then smirked. “Ohhh? You’re in love with my sister? Cute.”

Then her face darkened. “But listen up. If you ever hurt her — even once — I’ll find you. Stay loyal.”

She patted his cheek. “Good boy.”

Lucian blinked. “You’re… not Yūhi?”

She laughed out loud. “Nope! Twin sister. Yūga Tachibana. One minute older. And way scarier.”

Lucian exhaled. “I was going to say…”

“Don’t worry. I won’t tell her. Yet.”

She winked, strutted back to her bike, revved the engine, and zoomed away like a storm.

Ren emerged from the tree, whistling. “Wow. She’s terrifying. But I respect it.”

Lucian: “She’s… a lot.”

Ren: “You love them both now, don’t you?”

Lucian shoved him. Ren laughed harder.

That night, Yūga entered the house casually and tossed the phone onto Yūhi’s lap.

“Found your precious phone.”

Yūhi gasped. “WHERE?!”

“Lunar Café. Probably dropped it. You’re lucky I’m basically your knight in biker armor.”

Yūhi hugged it like it was treasure. “Thank you! Thank youuuu!”

Both sisters laughed and went to the kitchen to celebrate with cake and peach soda, while Yūhi’s heart still quietly raced at the thought of a storm-eyed boy she accidentally messaged.

Lucian Wujin.

And Yūga? Well, she had her own thoughts.

“This guy’s already blushing. This’ll be fun to watch.”

Chapter 6: Operation Cupid Begins

The morning bell rang in Jin-hai's prestigious girls' college. Inside Class 3-A, Yūhi Tachibana sat near the window, sunshine glowing against her hair as she chatted with Hana over their upcoming school festival.

"Three weeks left, Yūhi!" Hana said, waving a list of items. "Costumes, rehearsals, decorations—we are officially in chaos mode."

Yūhi smiled softly. "I know, but I'm kind of looking forward to it. It'll be our last big festival before graduation."

Hana leaned in with a teasing grin. "Also because a certain mysterious boy might show up again?"

Yūhi's face turned cherry red. "H-Hana! Nothing like that!"

"Uh-huh. Sure." Hana winked. "You've been zoning out and sketching hearts next to someone's name. Spill it."

Yūhi lowered her voice, whispering the whole story from Lunar Café — the wrong number, the accidental meeting, the noodles, the shy goodbye.

Hana squealed. "You're in a K-drama plot! I knew it!"

At Jin-hai Technical Boys College - Cafeteria

Chaos.

Yūga Tachibana's fists were flying. A senior had made a disgusting comment to a first-year girl, and now he was paying for it — with his face.

BAM!

He landed in mashed potatoes. The cafeteria erupted.

Then entered Ren Vektor. Lean, sharp-eyed, chaotic. Girls whispered and turned. Some waved. He ignored them.

He watched Yūga beat down a second guy and whistled. "Damn, she's got moves."

He stepped forward. "Yo, maybe stop before the furniture gets PTSD—"

SMACK!

Yūga’s punch caught him mid-sentence.

He stumbled back, holding his jaw. "What the hell!?"

She blinked. "Reflex. You moved too fast."

He stared. Then smirked. "You owe me ice cream."

She crossed her arms. "You wanted a private chat? Let's go. But try anything weird, and I’ll ruin your bloodline."

Meanwhile – Wujin Residence

Lucian sat at his desk. A sketchbook lay open. On the page: Yūhi’s face, her soft smile caught in graphite.

Ren’s voice rang in his head. "You’re so in love it hurts, bro."

Lucian muttered to himself. "Am I?"

His pencil trembled. "What even is this feeling..."

Later – Garden behind the boys’ gym

A rare calm space in Jin-hai. Birds chirped. Leaves rustled.

Ren rubbed his cheek. "You punch like a street boss."

Yūga leaned against a tree. "Then talk fast, chaos prince."

He grinned. "I’m Ren Vektor. Lucian’s cousin. You know Lucian, yeah? Mysterious hoodie guy who caught your sister’s heart."

She narrowed her eyes. "What about him?"

Ren got serious — as serious as he could. "Lucian’s into her. Majorly. And from what I’ve seen, your sister is blush-central every time his name comes up."

Yūga was silent.

Inside, she felt a flicker. Her soft, delicate twin. Falling in love.

She spoke. "Yūhi… she’s different. But yeah. I think she’s falling too."

Ren leaned in, waggling eyebrows. "Let’s team up. They’ll never confess. It’s painful to watch."

She snorted. "You’re a flirt with no shame."

"Correct. Also strategic genius. Also extremely handsome."

She fake gagged. "Keep dreaming."

He grinned. "Let’s play Cupid. You and me. The evil matchmakers."

She paused, then extended a fist. "You mess this up, and I punch your soul."

He fist-bumped. "Deal. And if this works, you owe me ice cream."

She smirked. "We’ll see."

Internal thoughts:

Ren: This girl’s scary. But kinda cool. And hot. Focus, Ren. Operation Cupid, not Operation Flirt.

Yūga: Lucian better be worth it. And if he hurts Yūhi… game over. Still, this idiot’s energy is weirdly fun.

And thus, the most chaotic, unexpected alliance was born. Their mission? Get Yūhi and Lucian together — by force if necessary.

Let Operation Cupid Begin.

(And may the gods of romance have mercy.)

Chapter 7: Confessions, Cafés, and Chaos

At Jin-hai Girls' College, the golden afternoon sun streamed through the classroom windows. Inside, Hana was practically bouncing in her seat, her eyes glued to Yūhi's dreamy expression.

"Yūhi Tachibana, you're glowing like a romantic drama lead. Spill. Now."

Yūhi blinked, cheeks tinting pink. "W-What do you mean?"

Hana leaned in, raising an eyebrow. "You've been smiling at nothing all day. I saw you tracing hearts into your notes again. Is it... him?"

Yūhi tried to hide behind her notebook. "It was a mistake. Just a text. Nothing more."

"Mistake my foot! You went to a whole café. You talked. You laughed. That's basically a proposal in anime logic. Now confess, or I'll scream."

Yūhi sighed, closing her notebook with a soft smile. "Okay. I think... maybe, I like him. It's strange. He was calm, mysterious, but also kind. Like... looking into a quiet storm."

Hana gasped dramatically. "OH MY STARS, YOU'RE IN LOVE!"

Yūhi clutched her notebook. "I don't know yet. But when I saw him, it felt like my heartbeat was trying to escape my chest."

"That's love, babe. Full-blown, fairytale, shojo-level romance. I need popcorn!"

They both burst into giggles as the bell rang, signaling the end of class.

Meanwhile – Lucian's House

Lucian stared at the sketch he'd just finished.

Yūhi.

Every line of her smile, the softness in her eyes — he had captured it all with precise strokes. He studied it in silence, then whispered:

"Why can't I stop thinking about her...?"

Elsewhere – A Cosy Corner Café in Jin-hai

Ren Vektor dramatically slammed down a notebook labeled "Operation Cupid."

Across from him, Yūga raised an unimpressed brow. "You made a whole mission file?"

"Of course," Ren said, sipping iced tea like a villain in a rom-com. "This is serious. We're creating a love story here."

Yūga leaned back. "You're enjoying this too much."

"And you're pretending not to. Admit it, Dangerous Twin, you love chaos."

She smirked. "Only if I get to punch someone in the middle of it."

They both laughed. Then Ren slid over a sketched map of the school festival.

"Here's the plan," he said. "Lucian will be helping backstage — because I'll make sure of it — and Yūhi will be performing. We orchestrate the perfect encounter. Boom. Sparks. Love explosion."

"You sure this'll work?"

"Yūga, do you not see the chemistry? They just need a nudge."

Yūga sipped her coffee, eyes narrowed. "Fine. But no cheesy stuff. No forced confessions."

"Scout's honor." Ren grinned. "And besides... it's fun working with you."

She gave him a side-eye. "You're flirting again."

"Always."

"Hmph. Try harder."

They both chuckled.

As the café bustled around them, the unlikely duo of chaos and combat finalized their grand romantic plan — not knowing they were slowly becoming a rom-com side couple themselves.

Operation Cupid had officially entered Phase 2.

Chapter 8: Lunar Café, Take Two

It was the weekend, and the skies above Jin-hai were dipped in gold, streaks of sunlight weaving through the clouds like threads of fate. Operation Cupid Phase 2 was officially launching.

Ren Vektor and Yūga Tachibana had a plan — risky, dramatic, and perfectly chaotic.

Step One: Trick the lovebirds into meeting.

Ren took responsibility for Lucian.

Back at the Wujin house, Ren walked into Lucian's room like a tornado with a mission.

"Hey, bro. Feel like grabbing coffee today?"

Lucian looked up from a circuit board. "No."

"Great, I booked us a spot at Lunar Café. Come in twenty minutes. Don't wear black. You'll scare people."

Lucian frowned. "Ren—"

"I said no black!" Ren shouted, already running out the door.

Meanwhile, Yūga had cornered Yūhi in their room.

"Hey," she said casually, arms crossed, looking far too innocent. "You've been overthinking too much lately. Let's get some air."

Yūhi blinked. "Air? Where?"

"Café run. Lunar. I'm treating."

"O-Oh... okay."

At Lunar Café – 5 PM

Yūhi and Yūga entered the cozy, familiar café. The lights were warm, the air smelled of caramel and roasted beans, and the background music was oddly... romantic.

Lucian and Ren had arrived just moments earlier.

Yūga's eyes sparkled as she spotted Ren across the room. She waved casually. "Hey! Ren? You're here too? What a coincidence."

Ren stood up with theatrical surprise. "Yūga? What are the odds!"

Lucian blinked. "This is suspicious."

"Shhh," Ren whispered. "Don't ruin the magic."

Yūhi stared wide-eyed between the two. "You two know each other?"

"Oh, just a little," Yūga said sweetly. "Hey, Ren — come help me pick a dessert from the counter."

Without waiting, she grabbed his arm and dragged him off, leaving Lucian and Yūhi frozen alone at the table.

Behind the counter, Yūga and Ren crouched like spies behind the espresso machine, eyes just barely peeking out.

"Operation Awkward Romance is go," Ren whispered.

Lucian cleared his throat. "Um... fancy seeing you here."

Yūhi laughed nervously, clutching her bag. "Yeah. Very...unexpected."

"You're not mad, right? That I'm here?"

"No, I mean—uh—why would I be?"

They both laughed awkwardly.

Ren whispered from the counter, "Oh my God, they're blushing in sync."

Yūga smirked. "I give it two minutes before one of them tries to flirt and chokes."

Back at the table, Lucian finally spoke. "So... you're doing okay? After, uh... that night?"

Yūhi nodded shyly. "I'm okay. It was... surprisingly fun. Even if I texted a total stranger."

Lucian chuckled. "Not a total stranger anymore, though. Right?"

Their eyes met. Something fluttered between them.

"No. Not anymore," she said softly.

Ren silently fist-pumped. "Yes. Yes. That's the spark!"

Lucian tried again. "You look nice today. Not that you don't always—uh—sorry, I mean..."

Yūhi giggled. "Thanks. You look... handsome. Like a scientist attending a date without knowing it's a date."

Lucian blinked. "Wait. Is it a date?"

Yūhi bit her lip. "I don't know. Maybe it could be... if you wanted it to."

Yūga's hand clamped over Ren's mouth before he could squeal.

The music in the background shifted — soft jazz and piano, echoing like a romantic movie scene.

Yūhi took a breath. "I'm really glad I texted the wrong number."

Lucian's voice was low. "I'm really glad I replied."

After an hour of nervous giggles, accidental hand brushes, and conversations that moved from coffee to constellations, the moment came to a slow, gentle close.

Lucian paid for both drinks before Yūhi could protest.

From behind the counter, Ren whispered, "Gentleman bonus unlocked."

As they stepped outside, the air cool and stars beginning to peek out, Yūhi looked up at him and smiled.

"Thanks for today. It was... really nice."

Lucian nodded. "Same time tomorrow?"

Yūhi's eyes widened, then sparkled. "Yes. I'd like that."

Back inside the café, Yūga grinned. "They're falling."

Ren leaned against the counter dramatically. "And we... are genius matchmakers."

Yūga chuckled. "For now. The festival is coming. Let's see if they survive Phase 3."

Ren held up a cookie like a wine glass. "To chaos. And love."

They high-fived over spilled sugar, watching the couple disappear down the misty street.

Operation Cupid was working.

To be continued…

Chapter 9: Festival Countdown Begins

The countdown had officially started — only two weeks left until the grand Jin-hai School Festival.

Banners fluttered across both campuses, the air buzzed with excitement, and students were running around with props, paint buckets, costume sketches, and way too much sugar. The scent of hot glue and fresh pastries wafted through the halls. The energy was electric.

At Jin-hai Girls' College

"Okay, team! Let's go over the schedule again!" Hana shouted like a general preparing for battle, standing in the middle of the classroom with a clipboard in one hand and a glitter marker in the other. Around her, chaos thrived — glitter everywhere, cardboard cutouts shaped like stars and moons, students yelling about light fixtures, and last-minute changes to costumes.

Yūhi Tachibana sat peacefully near the window, painting a cherry blossom tree across the back panel of the stage set. She was humming softly, her strokes delicate, her mind elsewhere.

Hana narrowed her eyes and marched over. "Don't tell me you're thinking about him while painting that tree."

Yūhi turned a shade of pink that rivaled the blossoms she was painting. "I-I was just focused."

"Focused on his jawline?" Hana teased, grinning wickedly.

Yūhi tried to nudge her away. "Hanaaa!"

"Okay okay," Hana laughed, plopping down beside her. "But seriously, I haven't seen you this glowy since we got free bubble tea that one time. What happened at the Lunar Café Ambush 2.0?"

Yūhi looked down, her brush still. "It was... sweet. He listened to me. Not like 'pretending to listen'... but really listened. We talked about stars, constellations, weird childhood dreams. I... didn't want it to end."

Hana gasped dramatically, clutching her chest. "Oh my glitter, Yūhi Tachibana is falling in love! This is not a drill!"

They burst into giggles, even as a stage curtain fell behind them.

Later, during a quiet break, Yūhi watched the light filter through the window. Her thoughts wandered again — not just to Lucian's voice, but the way he had looked at her like she wasn't invisible. She could still hear the soft music in the background of the café, the warmth of his laugh...

Elsewhere – Lucian's Room

Lucian was not at any school. He sat alone in the spare room of his late aunt's house, the one he and his mother had been staying in since arriving in Jin-hai over a month ago for the funeral. What was supposed to be a short visit stretched into something... longer.

He stared at the sketchpad in front of him. Yūhi's face was on the page again — gentle, smiling. His pencil moved on its own. He hadn't drawn like this in months. Her eyes were the hardest part.

He didn't even notice Ren until the guy sat on the windowsill, sipping his third iced soda of the day.

"You're in love with a sketchbook now? Should I warn Yūhi about her competition?"

Lucian looked up slowly. "It's not like that."

"Dude. You've redrawn her smile like ten times. It's exactly like that."

Lucian hesitated. "She's... different."

Ren smirked. "Different enough that I pulled strings and got you backstage access to her festival event. You're not even a student here. Technically, it's illegal."

Lucian blinked. "You did what?"

"You're welcome."

Lucian didn't say anything more. He just picked up his pencil again and started sketching her hand.

Meanwhile — The Local Bubble Tea Spot

Yūga stabbed her straw into her drink like it had wronged her. Across from her, Ren had laid out a full-color hand-drawn blueprint of Lunar Café, a glittery spiral notebook titled OPERATION CUPID — PHASE 3: FINAL STRIKE beside it.

"That notebook looks like a five-year-old made it blindfolded."

"Thank you. I consider it a masterpiece of organized chaos."

Yūga narrowed her eyes. "You really went through all this trouble? For a guy who isn't even your classmate anymore?"

Ren shrugged. "He's my cousin. And hopeless. Also, it's fun watching you get invested."

She smirked. "I'm not invested. I'm making sure no one breaks my sister's heart."

"Right. Totally not because you're enjoying this matchmaking nonsense with me."

"One more word and your iced latte is going on your face."

"Romance is war."

"Then I'm bringing tanks."

He leaned over, pointing to the blueprint. "We lure them back to Lunar Café. Reserved table. Candles. Dimmed lights. Romantic background music. And then... we vanish into the shadows and spy on everything."

"If this plan fails, I'm blaming your stupid glitter pen."

"That's fair."

They clinked bubble tea cups.

Operation Cupid: Phase 3 was ready.

Meanwhile — Hana's House

That evening, Yūhi and Hana were curled up in Hana's bedroom, fairy lights glowing around them, soft music playing from Hana's old phone. A pile of glittery festival outfits sat on the floor, half-folded.

"So," Hana said, gently nudging her with her elbow, "you're really falling for him, huh?"

Yūhi didn't answer right away. She looked down at her mug, swirling the hot cocoa.

"I think... I am. It's scary. But it feels good. When I talk to him, I don't feel like I'm pretending to be someone better, or quieter, or more perfect. I feel... safe."

Hana smiled and squeezed her shoulder. "You're brave. And lucky. You found something real."

Yūhi nodded slowly. She didn't say anything, but her heart was pounding just at the thought of seeing him again.

Lucian's Room — Night

Lucian pinned the finished sketch to the wall above his desk. Yūhi's eyes looked back at him, smiling.

He stared at it for a long moment.

Then, softly, as if afraid the air might swallow the words, he whispered:

"I want to see her again. Not as a coincidence. This time... because I choose to."

He closed the sketchbook. Tomorrow, he'd be backstage. Watching her.

Bubble Tea Plot Continues

Ren and Yūga leaned over the café blueprint again.

"Candles here. Light dimmed here. We'll hide behind this counter."

Yūga nodded. "And we play music when the conversation gets awkward."

"Exactly. And if one of them tries to run away—"

"We lock the door."

They both paused.

"Kidding!"

"Totally joking. Ha. Ha."

Ren snorted. "You're kind of scary."

Yūga raised a brow. "You kind of like it."

He laughed. "Unfortunately."

Their eyes met a moment longer than usual. Neither said anything.

Then they clinked their cups again.

Operation Cupid: Phase 3 wasn’t just ready to launch — it was inevitable.

Chapter 10: Practice Night Sparks

The festival week had finally arrived.

Jin-hai Girls' College was glowing — literally. Fairy lights wrapped around pillars, booths lined the walkways, and rehearsals echoed through the halls. The school buzzed with last-minute paint jobs, sound checks, and costume emergencies.

Yūhi stood behind the main stage, fingers fidgeting with the hem of her costume. The scent of hairspray, fresh flowers, and excitement filled the air.

"It's time, Yūhi," Hana whispered from behind, dressed as a moon spirit. "You look beautiful. And terrified."

Yūhi laughed nervously. "That's because I am both."

Lucian stood just outside the curtain, hidden in shadows. He wasn't supposed to be here — not as a student. But thanks to Ren's connections and a conveniently missing volunteer, he was now handling backstage lights and cues.

He watched from the side as Yūhi stepped onto the stage.

His breath caught.

She looked like a storybook.

Calm. Graceful. Radiating light.

She hadn't seen him yet, but that didn't matter. For now, he could admire from the shadows.

And maybe — finally — understand his own heart.

Above the gym balcony, behind fake bamboo props and a borrowed camera tripod, sat the two agents of chaos:

Ren Vektor and Yūga Tachibana.

"This is it," Ren whispered. "The soft confession moment. The dramatic performance. The longing glances. We win."

Yūga squinted through binoculars. "He better not freeze. If he does, I'm tossing a paintbrush at him."

Ren snorted. "Please do. I'll record it."

On stage, the lights dimmed.

Yūhi stepped forward, her voice clear and strong as she delivered her lines. It was a play about two lovers separated by stars and fate. The irony wasn't lost on her.

Her eyes scanned the audience. Then the backstage shadows.

She saw him.

Lucian.

Her voice faltered just for a beat — just enough to make Hana glance over — but she recovered.

Lucian held the light switch, frozen.

Yūhi.

She was here, in front of him. So close.

As the final scene played, the stars above the stage dimmed. The lovers reunited. The crowd applauded.

Yūhi stepped backstage, heart racing. Lucian turned instinctively.

They locked eyes.

For a second — just one heartbeat — it was like they were alone in the world.

Up on the balcony...

"NOW!" Ren whispered. "This is the part where someone confesses."

"Nope," Yūga said, chewing gum. "They'll stand there, blushing like tomatoes, say something awkward, then walk away."

They watched as, exactly that, happened.

Lucian opened his mouth. Closed it. Yūhi smiled. Looked down. Then they both nodded awkwardly... and stepped away.

"Called it," Yūga said, tossing popcorn into her mouth.

Ren sighed. "We need Phase 4."

"Yeah," she grinned. "And this time, we're bringing in the heavy fireworks."

That night, as the festival grounds quieted, Lucian sketched under the moonlight.

A silhouette of Yūhi, standing under stage lights.

Meanwhile, Yūhi lay in bed, the echoes of applause fading into her thoughts, and whispered:

"I saw you. I really saw you."

And somewhere, Ren was already doodling a banner labeled:

"Operation Cupid – Phase 4: Undercover Fireworks Editions."

Chapter 11: Rivals, Misunderstandings, and a Forgotten Confession

The festival had ended, but its magic hadn't faded.
Laughter still echoed in the halls. Photos of glowing lanterns filled student chats.
But for Lucian Wujin, the lights had gone out.

Lucian's Side — After the Festival

Lucian had returned home that evening with Yūhi's smile carved into his mind.
The soft glow of paper lanterns reflecting in her eyes, the way her laughter danced through the night air, the moment their hands brushed behind the stage — everything felt too perfect to be real.

And maybe it wasn't.

Because the next day, while lazily scrolling through his messages, he paused.

A photo from Ren.

Yūhi.

And a boy.

Kneeling.
Holding out a flower.
Yūhi blushing.

Lucian didn't read the caption.
Didn't ask.
Didn't breathe.

He just shut off.

The coffee cup in his hand slipped from his grip. Shattered.

He picked up his jacket and disappeared from the house.

Rooftop Bar — Hours Later

Lucian never drank. Not even at family weddings.
But that night, he sat on a rooftop bar in the heart of Jin-hai, staring blankly at the city lights. His third glass of something sharp was half-empty.

Ren found him there, slumped in a corner booth.

"Lucian!" Ren hissed, rushing to his side. "I told you to wait!"

Lucian’s lips curled into a bitter smile. "She… was smiling."

"Lucian—listen—"

"She was blushing. At him."

Ren’s face paled. "Wait. You misunderstood—"

"She was supposed to be mine..." Lucian slurred, gripping his phone. "And now… I’m just… just nothing."

He stared at the screen.

Message sent to Yūhi: “Forget it.”

Ren reached for his shoulder. "Lucian—hey, that guy was just a classmate! She turned him down! I swear I was gonna tell you—"

But Lucian was gone.
His body was still there. But his heart?

It had collapsed under the weight of assumptions.

Yūhi’s Room

Yūhi sat curled on her bed, replaying the confession in her mind.

A boy from her class had stopped her as she packed up decorations. He nervously handed her a daisy and confessed.

She had politely smiled, bowed, and said:
“I’m sorry. There’s… someone else.”

Now, her phone buzzed.

A message.

From Lucian.

Just two words:

Forget it.

Her breath caught.

"What… does that mean?"

The Bluff Call — Ren's Last Trick

Ren sat outside the bar, fingers trembling over his phone. Then he made the call.

To Yūhi.

“Ren? Is everything okay?” she asked, concerned.

"Yūhi…" he said, voice low. “Lucian's drunk. And he just said… he doesn't want to live anymore.”

Silence.

“…What?”

“I'm scared. I think he might do something stupid. He's on the rooftop bar by North Bridge. Please. Just go.”

Click.

He didn't wait.
Because he knew she'd run.

North Bridge Rooftop Bar — Minutes Later

Yūhi pushed open the heavy glass door, panting. Her heart felt like it would shatter from fear.

Then she saw him.

Lucian.
Leaning dangerously on the edge railing, arms out, drink in hand.

"Lucian!" she shouted.

He turned slowly. Eyes glazed. "Oh. Look who showed up."

"Get down from there!"

He chuckled bitterly. “Why? It’s a good view to watch your heart break.”

"Lucian, what are you talking about?!"

"You’re a liar, Yūhi! You said you wanted to see me again. Then I see you blushing while some clown hands you flowers?!"

She stepped forward, tears welling. "He confessed to me! I turned him down! I said there’s someone else—someone who makes my heart feel like it’s flying—!"

Lucian froze.

"You… turned him down?"

"I’ve only ever liked you, Lucian!" she cried. "Idiot!"

The rooftop fell silent.

Then Lucian blinked. His voice cracked. "I... I messed everything up, didn’t I?"

"You think?!"

He swayed. She ran and caught him before he fell.

“I’m a disaster,” he mumbled into her shoulder. “I ruined everything.”

Yūhi slowly pulled him back.

“No,” she whispered. “You were just scared.”

Then—

He kissed her.

Sloppily. Desperately. Like a man drowning in guilt and longing.
And Yūhi kissed back.

Not because it was perfect — but because it was real.

Aftermath — Dropping Him Home

Later, Yūhi walked Lucian home, half-carrying him while he mumbled nonsense.

At the door, he turned to her, eyes half-closed.

“I like you,” he whispered, barely audible. “So much it hurts.”

Then he passed out.

Yūhi stood there in the silence, brushing a hand against her lips.

“I like you too, idiot,” she murmured. “But you better remember this kiss in the morning.”

Chapter 12: The Morning After the Storm

Morning light stretched lazily across the floorboards of Lucian Wujin's room. The golden beams crept up to where he lay, tangled in a blanket, one leg off the side of the couch, hair a mess, mind still floating somewhere between dream and fog.

Something felt off.

No pain. No hangover pounding behind his eyes. Just… lightness. A strange kind of peace, like he'd cried something out in the night or left behind a heavy stone he didn't even realize he was carrying.

He sat up slowly. The blanket slipped down his shoulder, and a faint scent of vanilla clung to the fabric. Something tugged at the back of his mind. A feeling. A memory. Almost sweet.

He stood, stretched, then made his way toward the bathroom. He caught his reflection mid-yawn. His eyes held a softness they hadn't in weeks.

And yet... something was missing.

He brushed his teeth on autopilot, glancing once at a crumpled tissue on the floor — lipstick smudged faintly on the edge. He blinked.

What...?

He hadn't—

No. No way.

He rinsed his mouth and stepped back into his room just as the door creaked open.

His mother stood there, holding a basket of folded clothes and an expression somewhere between exasperated and amused.

"You're finally up," she said. "Honestly, Lucian."

"Good morning?" he offered, confused.

She walked in and set the basket on his desk. "Do you want to explain why you came home drunk last night? You, of all people?"

Lucian's eyes widened. "I… wait, what?"

"You came home looking like a soggy noodle. You could barely stand. And the best part?" She raised a finger. "You didn't come home alone."

He stared.

"A girl brought you home," she added.

Lucian's brain stopped working. "W-What girl?"

His mother rolled her eyes. “Pretty. Strong. Looked like she was five seconds from punching someone. Fierce aura. Brown eyes. Wavy hair. You called her ‘Yūhi’ about a dozen times.”

His face turned red. “You’re joking.”

"Lucian. I opened the door to find a teenage girl dragging my drunken son like a sack of regrets. And do you know what she said to me? ‘Don’t worry, ma’am, I’ve got him. I’ve carried heavier dumbbells at the gym.’”

Lucian covered his face with both hands. “Kill me.”

She snorted. "You’re lucky she was polite. She looked like she could’ve dumped you in a trash can and walked away."

“I never drink,” he groaned. “What happened to me...?”

His mother folded a shirt, sat on the edge of his bed, and looked at him gently. “I don’t know what happened last night. But you should be asking yourself why someone like her would bring you home, look after you, and not say a word after.”

Lucian sat down slowly, his thoughts spinning.

"I… I think I told her," he said.

"Told her what?"

"That I love her."

His mother’s eyes warmed. “That girl means something to you.”

Lucian nodded, quietly.

She gave him a small smile and touched his hair gently, just for a moment. “Then don’t waste this.”

He looked up at her, his voice low. “But… I don’t remember any of it. After I drank... it’s all gone.”

"Then go find out," she said. “And maybe next time, confess while sober.”

She left him with that.

Ren opened the door still in pajamas, cereal bowl in one hand, messy-haired and wide-awake in the worst way.

Lucian didn't bother with greetings. “What happened last night?”

Ren blinked. “Oh. We're doing this already?”

"Ren."

He stepped aside. “Come in, Tragic Protagonist.”

Lucian followed, arms folded tight across his chest.

Ren plopped down on the couch, still munching. “So you remember nothing?”

"Just that I drank. And maybe cried.”

Ren grinned. “You didn't cry. You shouted.”

Lucian froze. “Shouted what?”

Ren smirked. “That she ruined you.”

Lucian sank into a chair.

“You said she was the reason flowers still bloom, and that her smile made you believe in God.”

He groaned, burying his face in his hands.

“Oh, and you called me your ‘Royal Matchmaker Idiot.’ I accept the title.”

“I'm going to move to another planet.”

Ren tilted his head. “You seriously don't remember the part where she showed up?”

Lucian blinked. “What?”

“She came,” Ren said simply. “I called her. She was panicking, showed up in ten minutes, wild eyes and all. She saw you, and it was like something broke in her. You told her you loved her.”

Lucian's throat tightened.

“You shouted it. In front of half the bar. Everyone clapped.”

He stared, stunned.

“Then you grabbed her and kissed her,” Ren added casually. “Very dramatic. Very movie-like. You dipped her.”

Lucian collapsed backward. “Ren…”

“Look on the bright side,” Ren said, sipping his cereal milk. “You finally confessed.”

Lucian closed his eyes, a rush of heat climbing up his neck.

“…And she didn’t run away.”

He opened them again.

“She dropped you home. You fell asleep with her name on your lips.”

Lucian leaned forward, quiet. “…Then why do I feel like I dreamed it?”

“Because,” Ren said, his grin softening, “you’ve wanted it for so long, you never imagined it’d be real.”

Lucian stared at the floor, mind racing.

Yūhi.

She heard everything.

She kissed him back.

And he couldn’t remember a second of it.

Chapter 13 Rain

The skies over Jin-hai were heavy with clouds, and by noon, the first drops began to fall.

It wasn’t a thunderstorm. No lightning. No drama. Just a soft, steady drizzle — like the sky was sighing.

Lucian stood beneath the eaves of a quiet street, hands in his pockets, hair damp from the walk. The collar of his jacket was upturned, but he didn’t shiver. The chill in the air didn’t reach the part of him that mattered. That part was burning.

He had walked all the way from home. Through wet leaves and puddles and silence. He didn’t bring an umbrella. On purpose.

Because he wanted the rain to soak him.
Because he wanted to feel it.
Because his heart wouldn’t stop whispering her name.

Yūhi.

He remembered the bar. The drinking. Ren's voice. Then... nothing. But every time he closed his eyes, he felt a flash of warmth, the press of someone’s hands against his chest, the brush of lips.

A kiss.

Was it a dream?

He didn’t know. But his mother’s words echoed louder today than ever.

“Don’t waste this.”

So here he was. Standing near the front gate of Jin-hai Girls’ College, soaked and stupid and scared out of his mind.

Would she talk to him?

Would she even want to see him?

He exhaled, a cloud of breath in the misty air.

Then — he saw her.

A pale umbrella bobbing in the distance. Her schoolbag slung over her shoulder. Her steps slow, thoughtful.

She looked up—

And stopped.

Lucian. Standing in the rain like a lost poem.

Yūhi didn't move.

For a moment, the world held its breath.

And then... she walked toward him.

No words.

She just stopped in front of him, looking up, her umbrella shielding only her — the rain painting Lucian in silver.

He smiled — just a little.

"I think I said something to you."

Yūhi nodded. "You did."

"I don't remember it."

Her grip on the umbrella tightened. "I figured."

"Did I… ruin everything?" he asked quietly.

A pause. Then she stepped closer, the edge of the umbrella now covering half of him.

"You didn't ruin anything," she whispered. "You just forgot the best part."

His heart stuttered. "What was it?"

Her cheeks were red. Not from the cold.

"You kissed me," she said.

Lucian froze.

"You kissed me like you'd waited years. You told me you loved me. In the most ridiculous, loud, embarrassing, beautiful way."

Silence.

Lucian stared at her, eyes wide.

“I didn’t stop you,” she added. “I kissed you back.”

Raindrops slipped down his cheek — or maybe they were tears. He didn’t know.

“I don’t remember it,” he said, voice breaking. “But I know I meant it.”

Yūhi smiled.

“I know.”

Lucian took the umbrella from her hand slowly and tossed it aside.

The rain fell around them.

He stepped forward, closing the space between them. Their foreheads touched.

“I want to remember it,” he whispered. “But I want more than that… I want to kiss you again.”

Yūhi’s breath caught.

And then — like the sky leaned in to listen — she kissed him.

There, under soft rain and grey clouds and hearts too full to speak.

It wasn’t a drunken kiss.
It wasn’t a dramatic shout.
It was quiet. Real. Raw.

The kind of kiss you feel even years later when the world is cold and you need a reason to believe again.

When they pulled apart, her fingers lingered on his jacket.

He whispered, “Now I’ll never forget.”

They stood there as the rain poured — not hiding, not hurrying, not speaking.

Just remembering.

Just beginning.

Chapter 14: Sparks Beneath the Surface

It was quiet for once in Jin-hai.

A soft breeze slipped through the city, brushing past the alleys and open cafés, winding between bicycles parked near lamp-lit sidewalks. The post-rain clouds had drifted on, leaving behind the cool, fragrant calm of evening.

And in a small café tucked into a side street, Yūga Tachibana and Ren Vektor sat across from each other—again.

For the fifth time this week.

"You're quiet today," Ren said, tilting his head. "No sarcastic roast? No calling me a disaster in human skin?"

Yūga was sipping iced black coffee, her hair damp from the drizzle, tied back in a messy braid. She didn’t respond right away.

Ren leaned back and watched her. She was looking out the window. Not at the people, but at the sky.

"You okay?" he asked, softer now.

She turned. Their eyes met. For a second, her guard lowered.

Then she shrugged. "I’m fine. Just... thinking."

Ren raised an eyebrow. "Dangerous."

Yūga gave a half-smile. "I was wondering if you’d come tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?"

She tapped the straw against her glass. "It’s my birthday. And Yūhi’s. We were born on the same day, remember?"

Ren’s face lit up in surprise. "Wait—tomorrow is your birthday? And hers?"

Yūga rolled her eyes. "Wow. The genius finally catches up."

"Hey, I was busy plotting your sister’s love life. No one told me I was working with twins born under the sign of emotional destruction."

She smirked. "Well, now you know. So? Are you coming?"

Ren blinked. "To your house?"

"Yes. My house. Cake, party, possible chaos. My mom will act like it's the royal wedding, and my dad will probably barbecue in a storm just to prove a point."

He chuckled. "Sounds intense."

"It is. My mom's dramatic. Like Oscar-worthy dramatic. Last year she cried over candles melting too early. And my dad acts like he's guarding two national treasures."

Ren paused, smiling. "He kind of is."

Yūga's expression flickered. "Don't say things like that."

"Why not?"

"Because then I start thinking you're a decent guy," she said, standing up and pulling her hoodie over her head.

Ren watched her, amused. "That would be dangerous."

"Exactly."

As she stepped toward the café door, she looked back once, hands in her pockets, rain boots squeaking against the floor.

“You better not forget. I hate people who forget things that matter.”

Then she was gone, swallowed by the dusk.

Ren sat in silence, blinking once. Then twice.

Something pressed against his chest — a little weightless ache, unfamiliar but not unwelcome.

He leaned back in his chair.

“She said it's her birthday…” he murmured.

And he smiled.

Later That Night — Ren's Apartment

Lucian was lying on Ren's bed, tossing a pencil in the air, catching it by instinct. Ren stood by the window, leaning against the sill.

"She invited me to her house," Ren muttered.

Lucian caught the pencil. "Who?"

"Yūga."

Lucian raised a brow. "Your chaos partner?"

Ren nodded. "She said it's their birthday. Hers and Yūhi's."

Lucian's expression softened. "You're going, right?"

Ren gave a slow nod. "Yeah. I think I want to be there. Just for her."

Lucian smiled faintly. "Then wear something nice. That mom of theirs sounds like she could vaporize you with her glare."

"I'm more worried about impressing the older sister," Ren said, glancing toward the night sky through the glass. "Not that I care. Obviously."

Lucian rolled his eyes. "Obviously."

Ren chuckled, but deep down, he knew.
This wasn't just any birthday party.

It might just be the beginning of something real.

Chapter 15: Twins' Birthday

The Tachibana house was alive with light.

In the warm glow of early evening, lanterns swayed gently above the courtyard, strung like stars in celebration. The smell of grilled yakitori, vanilla cake, and something faintly citrusy from their mother's candles clung to the air. It wasn't loud like a party — it was better. It was a home dressed up in memory, mischief, and warmth.

Inside, slippers clattered across wooden floors. Music played softly from the kitchen speaker. On the living room wall, a banner read: "Happy 19th Birthday, Yūga & Yūhi!" in clumsy gold paint, courtesy of Hana's chaotic handwriting.

Yūhi spun around the living room in a pale blue cotton dress, her hair tied loosely behind her, bare feet padding over the tatami as she tried to wrangle her gifts into one corner.

Hana, dressed in a pastel pink jumpsuit, was snapping photos of everything: the cake, the balloons, Yūhi's cheeks. "Hold still! You look like a princess trying to run from her own coronation."

"I feel like I'm in a fever dream," Yūhi laughed, twirling once.

"It's a good dream." Hana winked. "Especially when tall, quiet boys show up bearing awkward gifts."

Yūhi blinked. "He's coming?"

"Did you think he'd forget?"

Before she could respond, the doorbell rang.

At the Gate

Ren stood at the front step with his usual smug expression, a crumpled bouquet of lilies in one hand, and a slightly crooked tie hanging from his neck like he'd lost a fight with it. Beside him stood Lucian.

Lucian wore black.

Not in mourning — in precision. Clean black shirt, sleeves rolled, no jacket. His hair was still a bit damp from the shower. He held a simple gift bag and a look like he wasn't sure if he was about to be welcomed or tried in court.

The door opened.

Yūga stood in the frame, hoodie sleeves rolled to her elbows, a birthday crown tilted lazily on her head.

"You're late," she said.

Ren smirked. "Would've been earlier but somebody ironed his shirt three times."

Lucian didn't respond. His eyes were locked on the window where Yūhi had just vanished.

Yūga sighed and stepped aside. "Shoes off. Don't insult anyone. If you touch the birthday cake before 9, I will kill you."

"Understood."

Inside — The Welcome

Their mother was already in action — theatrical, opinionated, and oddly fond of interrogating the boys.

"So you're the one who made my daughter cry two weeks ago."

Lucian blinked. "I… wasn't informed there was crying."

"She hides it. Like I used to. It's in our blood."

"Mom!" Yūhi hissed from across the room, her face now a shade pinker than the streamers.

Ren chuckled. "Ma'am, I have no intention of making anyone cry unless it's from laughter."

She looked him over. "You look like a liar. But a charming one."

Yūga passed by with a plate of takoyaki. "He is. That's why he's my problem."

Hana, meanwhile, had already dragged Lucian to the photo booth corner and was posing him next to a blushing Yūhi.

"Say you forgot the confession but still feel it in your bones!"

Lucian looked at the camera. "I'm not saying that."

Yūhi giggled. “He said it with his eyes.”

Click.

Later — In the Backyard

The cake was a towering structure of white frosting and strawberry slices, lit with 19 candles for each girl. When the flames were lit, everyone stood in a circle around the patio, some clapping, some chanting, a few — like Ren — throwing confetti from their sleeves.

“Make a wish!” Hana shouted.

Yūhi closed her eyes. Yūga glanced at the stars. Then together, they blew out the candles.

Back Porch — Quiet Moments

Ren found Yūga alone near the porch railing, sipping soda from a cracked ceramic cup. He sat next to her on the wooden bench.

“Happy birthday,” he said.

“You already said that.”

“Still true.”

She looked sideways at him. “You actually came.”

“I always come when it matters.”

She nodded slowly, then looked away. “We don’t do candles in this house. Not real ones. Mom thinks it’s bad luck. But I lit one anyway. For my wish.”

He leaned a little closer. “And what did you wish for?”

“I’m not telling you.”

He smiled. “Then I’ll guess.”

She rolled her eyes. “You’ll be wrong.”

“But what if I’m not?”

She didn’t answer. But she didn’t move away either.

Upstairs — Yūhi’s Room

Lucian sat awkwardly on the rug as Yūhi unwrapped a present from Hana.

“Handmade candles,” Yūhi whispered. “She said they’re for ‘midnight wishes and boy confusion.’”

Lucian laughed quietly. “She’s terrifying.”

Yūhi lit one. The flame danced.

He looked at her then, more serious. “I wanted to come tonight. Not just because you invited me. But because I remembered... the way I felt that night.”

“The night you forgot?” she teased gently.

He nodded. “I may not remember everything I said. But I remember how I felt.”

“And how’s that?”

He looked at her — really looked at her. Then leaned forward slightly.

“Like I belonged here. With you.”

She swallowed, heart thudding. “Then don’t forget this.”

And she kissed him.

Soft. Sure. The kind of kiss that came with candles and birthdays and second chances.

Downstairs, Ren and Yūga sat beneath the stars.

Neither spoke for a while.

Then Ren said, “You never told me what your wish was.”

Yūga leaned back, hands behind her head.

“I didn’t need to. It came true anyway.”

He turned to look at her. “What was it?”

She glanced at him.

“You came.”

He smiled. “Yeah.”

And above them, the lanterns swayed, the night stretched on, and two pairs of twins sat in the middle of something quietly extraordinary — growing up, falling in love, and making room for each other in a world full of chaos.

And birthdays.

And beginnings.

Chapter 16: First Date and Spy Games

The sky was painted with soft hues of rose and gold as the evening sun dipped lower over Jin-hai city. The streets were filled with the usual after-school bustle—students chatting and laughing, couples strolling hand in hand, street vendors packing up their carts.

Yūhi Tachibana and Lucian Wujin stepped out of a cozy, little café, the faint scent of fresh coffee and pastries lingering in the air. They walked side by side, each carrying a quiet, hopeful smile.

“So…” Yūhi started, twisting the strap of her bag nervously, “that was… really nice.”

Lucian adjusted the collar of his jacket, clearing his throat. “Yeah. Nice. You looked—” He paused, searching for the right word, “happy.”

She blinked, cheeks flushing slightly. “I was. I mean, I’m glad you came with me. I wasn’t sure you would.”

Lucian’s lips twitched into a shy grin. “I wouldn’t miss it.”

Their steps slowed as they reached a small park bench, shaded by a ginkgo tree shedding golden leaves. Lucian held the bench open for her with a soft “After you,” and she sat down, folding her hands in her lap.

“So,” Yūhi said, looking up at him with a teasing smile, “were you sketching me the whole time?”

He groaned, rubbing the back of his neck. “You caught me. I tried to focus on the coffee, but your smile kept distracting me.”

She laughed, the sound like a gentle bell in the quiet evening.

Lucian reached into his bag and pulled out a small folded sketch. “Here.” He unfolded it carefully. “I drew this just now, at the café.”

Yūhi’s eyes lit up as she examined the drawing—a soft, impressionistic portrait of her, with the cherry blossoms she loved drifting around her head.

“It’s beautiful,” she whispered.

Lucian shrugged, looking embarrassed. “It’s not perfect. But it’s for you.”

She met his gaze, and for a moment, the world seemed to pause.

Across the street, crouched behind a thick hedge, two figures peered through their makeshift binoculars—empty toilet paper rolls duct-taped together with a desperate kind of enthusiasm.

“Okay, okay,” Ren muttered, “I admit. This is kind of creepy.”

Yūga smirked. “Since when do you care about creepy? You’ve been planning this whole operation.”

Ren groaned. “Yeah, but spying on people like secret agents? That’s next-level weird.”

Yūga elbowed him. “Next-level romantic.”

Ren shot her a sideways glance. “Only because you’re romanticizing the whole thing. This is spying, not a rom-com montage.”

Yūga whispered, “Rom-coms are just spy missions in disguise. Think about it.”

Ren shook his head, stifling a laugh. “You’re twisted.”

Yūga’s grin deepened. “You love it.”

They settled into a comfortable silence, eyes fixed on Yūhi and Lucian.

“Look at him,” Yūga whispered. “Trying to look casual while he totally can’t stop staring.”

Ren nodded. “And she’s pretending not to notice, but every time he talks, she smiles like he just told her a secret joke.”

“Adorable,” Yūga said softly.

Ren glanced at her, brow raised. “You getting sentimental over our mission?”

“Shut up,” she replied with a playful shove.

Back on the bench, Lucian was gathering courage.

“So…” he said, voice low and a bit hesitant, “would you like to do this again? Maybe sometime?”

Yūhi’s heart skipped. She smiled warmly. “I’d like that.”

The words felt light but full of promise.

Suddenly, a loud sneeze startled them both.

Lucian’s eyes darted to a pigeon perched nearby, fluffing its feathers.

Yūhi giggled. “Even the pigeons approve.”

Lucian laughed, a genuine, easy sound that made Yūhi’s chest warm.

Behind the bush, Ren nudged Yūga. “Mission accomplished?”

She shook her head. “No way. We have to see if they survive the next level—awkward silence.”

Ren smirked. “Right. I’m ready with my witty commentary.”

Yūga raised an eyebrow. “You mean your snarky insults.”

Ren grinned. “Same thing.”

Yūga rolled her eyes, but her smile was fond. “Remember last week when you tripped over your own feet trying to ‘sneak’ up on me?”

Ren pretended to be offended. “That was a tactical retreat!”

“Tactical?” Yūga laughed. “You face-planted into the bushes.”

Ren stuck his tongue out. “And you couldn’t stop laughing.”

“True. But I admit, it was kind of funny.”

Back at the park bench, Yūhi pulled her jacket a little tighter against the evening chill.

“Thank you,” she said softly, “for today. For all of it.”

Lucian’s gaze softened. “No, thank you. I’ve never… felt this way before.”

Yūhi looked up at him, heart pounding.

Across the street, Ren shifted closer to Yūga, lowering his voice.

“You know,” he said, “if anyone’s spying on us like this someday, I hope it’s you.”

Yūga caught his eye, cheeks tinting pink.

“Stop it,” she whispered, turning away.

Ren chuckled. “You’re impossible.”

Yūga smiled, feeling a flutter in her chest.

As night finally fell and stars began to twinkle, two couples—one just beginning their story, the other quietly writing theirs behind the scenes—watched the world change around them.

And for Ren and Yūga, the mission wasn’t just about matchmaking anymore.

It was about what happened in the spaces between.

Chapter 17: Afterglow and Storms

The sky wore lavender dusk like a secret. Jin-hai breathed softly in the afterglow of the twins' birthday and the magic of a long-awaited first date.

Yūhi stood barefoot on her balcony, fingers curled around the cool railing, the wind combing through her hair like a quiet memory. Her cheeks still carried the warmth of his hand brushing hers, his uncertain smile under the fairy lights, the way he looked at her — like the world stopped spinning just for a second.

She sighed, her heart still fluttering.
A date.
With Lucian Wujin.

She leaned her cheek against the railing, smiling faintly to herself.

Downstairs, the chaos of her household was much louder.

"You let him walk her home?! And didn't film it?!" her mother wailed dramatically into the couch cushions.

"Mom," Yūhi called tiredly from above, "he just walked me home."

Her mother sat bolt upright. "Walked you home like a prince carrying moonlight in his pocket?! You are my daughter — why must you hide the best romance arc of the century from me?!"

"Because you're saying things like that."

Hana, sipping juice beside her, whispered, "She's not wrong though."

Yūhi turned beet red and retreated back upstairs before the dramatics could hit opera level.

Meanwhile — Lucian's Apartment

Lucian was in his room, brushing his thumb lightly over the cover of his sketchbook.

Inside were dozens of half-finished sketches: her smile, her eyes, her hand folded around a cup, her laughter sketched in jagged lines of motion. He couldn't stop drawing her. Couldn't stop remembering every second of that night.

The light knock on his door wasn't his mother.

It was a courier.

A small envelope. No return address.

Inside it was a letter.

And two plane tickets.

Jin-hai → Neo Alexandria (Round Trip)

He stared at the name for a full minute before his chest tightened.

Neo Alexandria.

Home.

Or what used to be.

Lucian slowly unfolded the letter inside. His father's handwriting. Formal. Cold.

"You've been away long enough. This is not a request, Lucian.
Handle the estate, attend the meetings, and return before the end of the fiscal cycle.
Thirty days. No excuses.
—Elias Wujin"

His fingers curled around the paper.

Thirty days.

And then what?

He didn't know. But a shadow passed through his chest — heavy and cold.

He looked at the ticket again.

The clock had started ticking.

Across Town — Beneath the Rain

The storm had rolled in suddenly.

Ren and Yūga were pressed together beneath a bus stop shelter, both soaked from the shoulders down, the rain falling in heavy silver ropes around them.

"For the record," Yūga muttered, "you're the idiot who said 'Let's just follow them, we'll be fast.'"

Ren, dripping wet, smirked. "You didn't exactly resist."

"I came for the cake. You came for the spying. And now look at us. Drenched. Miserable. Smelling like wet socks."

Ren shrugged off his jacket and tossed it over her shoulders.

She blinked. "...What was that?"

"You looked cold."

Yūga blinked again. "You're being nice. That's suspicious."

"I'm allowed to be decent sometimes."

"You're usually a golden retriever mixed with a raccoon."

He chuckled. "Still pretty loyal."

Yūga tried to hold back her laugh, but failed. Her eyes sparkled beneath the rain-speckled awning.

"You know," he added, leaning against the pole, "you're kind of cute when you're sarcastic and wet."

She turned. "That sentence is one restraining order away from a lawsuit."

"I meant emotionally. Wet emotionally."

"That makes no sense."

He stepped closer. Not in a dramatic way — just enough to quiet the teasing for a second.

"You were the first one to notice when I was breaking," he said softly. "Even when you pretended not to care. And you still show up. Even now."

Yūga looked at him, eyes narrowing slightly. "...Are you trying to kiss me?"

He grinned. "Only if I get struck by lightning first."

They both laughed, the moment light and full and warm despite the cold.

But when their laughter faded, the silence between them was gentle. Honest.

She nudged him with her shoulder. "Don’t make this weird."

"You make it weird."

"You make everything weird."

"Yet you’re still here."

She rolled her eyes. "I hate that you’re charming sometimes."

He smirked. "You love it."

They didn’t kiss.

Not yet.

But something in the air changed.

Something started to shift.

Later That Night — Lucian's Room

Lucian sat on his bed, letter and ticket on the nightstand, and a storm behind his eyes.

He stared at his phone. No new messages.

He debated texting her. Yūhi.

He wanted to tell her everything.

But something stopped him.

Maybe the ticking clock. Maybe fear. Maybe the realization that happiness, for someone like him, always came with a price tag.

He whispered to himself:
“I just found her... why does the universe always take things away the moment I start to hope?”

He didn't sleep that night.

And outside, in the rhythm of the rain, the countdown had begun.

Thirty days.

One letter.

One girl.

One chance.

Before it all changed.

Chapter 18: Choices and Chances

The letter from Neo Alexandria sat untouched on Lucian's nightstand like a silent bomb.

Every morning, he stared at it. Every night, he turned away.

A one-way ticket. Thirty days left.
He hadn't told Yūhi.

Week One: Temporary Peace, Permanent Eyes

Lucian buried himself in moments with her — holding her hand in bookstores, walking through soft pink dusk in the park, painting with her in the old art room with music humming low in the background.

What he didn't know?

They were never alone.

"Pass me the binoculars," Yūga muttered, crouched behind a low garden wall with Ren.

Ren smirked, handing her a ridiculous pink spyglass instead. "We're five meters away. Do you need those?"

"Yes. For the drama."

They peeked just in time to see Lucian gently tuck a strand of Yūhi's hair behind her ear.

Ren made a face. "I'm gonna throw up."

Yūga nudged him. "Admit it. You ship it."

He groaned. "Fine. But I still think they're gross."

She whispered dramatically, "You're just jealous because no one tucks your hair behind your ear."

He looked at her. "Would you like to?"

"…Shut up."

Week Two: Laughter, Candy, and Confusing Hearts

The Jin-hai Light Carnival was chaos in motion.

Lucian and Yūhi ran through glow-stall mazes, shared sugar-dusted donuts, and took awkward selfies in a photo booth that kept cutting off their heads.

Hidden nearby, Yūga and Ren blended into the crowd like professional weirdos.

"She's laughing so much," Yūga noted, biting into a chocolate banana. "I haven't seen her like this since the sixth grade."

Ren glanced sideways at her. "You're smiling too."

Yūga blinked. "What?"

He shrugged. "Just saying."

She looked away, too fast.

Later that night, they shared a ride on the Ferris wheel "accidentally."

"You planned this," she accused.

Ren raised a brow. "Me? Sabotage the line to make sure we were stuck together in a cozy little cage of romantic tension? Never."

"Idiot," she mumbled, but she didn't move away when he let his hand rest between them.

Week Three: Secrets, Shadows, and Side-Eyes

Lucian's heart was getting heavier.

Ren confronted him during a stakeout that turned into a venting session under a food truck canopy.

"You have to tell her."

“I’m trying.”

“What are you scared of?”

Lucian didn’t answer, but the look in his eyes said everything.
Of losing her before I even truly had her.

Back in their spy spot, Yūga watched Yūhi press her hands to her chest after Lucian walked away.

“She knows something’s wrong.”

Ren nodded. “And he knows she knows.”

“Do you ever wonder,” Yūga said slowly, “if we’re always going to be the ones watching… but never being watched?”

Ren blinked at her.

Then he grinned. “You want me to stare at you like Lucian stares at your sister?”

“I will throw you into this bush.”

They both burst out laughing — too loud — and had to duck when Yūhi turned around.

Week Four: Goodbyes You Don’t Say

The moments became slower. Quieter. More precious.

Yūhi gave Lucian a handmade scarf. Lucian gave her a painting.

They sat on a rooftop in silence, heads leaned together, the stars spinning above them like soft ink.

Across the street, in the shadows, Ren and Yūga watched… again.

But this time, they weren’t mocking. They weren’t joking.

Ren whispered, “Would you miss me like that?”

Yūga blinked. “What?”

“If I left.”

Silence.

Then, softly, “I’d kill you if you left without saying goodbye.”

Their hands brushed between them. Just brushed.

No one moved them away.

The Day Before

Lucian stood at Yūhi’s gate.

He still hadn’t told her.

She gave him a crooked little cake she baked herself. He gave her the scarf back — not to return, but to wrap around both their hands like a promise.

“I want to remember this forever,” she said.

His voice cracked. “You will.”

Ren and Yūga sat in a tree nearby.

“She’s going to be shattered,” Yūga whispered, tears in her eyes.

Ren didn't speak. But his grip on her hand tightened.

That Night

Lucian stared at the Neo Alexandria plane ticket.
Twelve hours left.

His phone buzzed. Yūhi’s message:

“If I knew how much this would hurt… I still would’ve chosen you.”

He didn’t respond.

He held the scarf like a lifeline.

And cried quietly in the dark.

Ren was still awake too. He sat on his rooftop, next to Yūga.

“You okay?” she asked softly.

He didn’t answer.

Instead, he looked at her and said, “If I go crazy tomorrow, will you come find me?”

She smirked. “Only if you bring bubble tea.”

And under the stars, their fingers intertwined.

Thirty days.

Thirty moments.

One truth: Time doesn't wait for love. But sometimes… it teaches you just how much love can wait.

Chapter 19: Departure and Distance

(Ten months after Lucian left Jin-hai)

Jin-hai had learned to live with quiet.

Not silence — just... quiet. The kind that lingers when someone important has been missing for too long. When their laughter used to echo in the corners of every hallway, and now the walls just breathe without them.

But not everyone had disappeared.

Some people stayed. Some people, surprisingly, grew closer.

At the Tachibana House — Evening Light

Yūga's cheek rested on Yūhi's shoulder, her voice muffled by the cotton of her twin's sweatshirt.

"He's still annoying," she muttered.

Yūhi turned the page of an old photo album. "Ren?"

"Who else calls me 'Agent Sass' and eats three spicy buns in a row just to impress me?"

Yūhi smiled gently. "You like it."

Yūga sighed. "I really do. Unfortunately."

She paused, her voice softer now. "I think I fell for him. Somewhere between the bubble tea raids and the rooftop surveillance missions... I just fell."

Yūhi looked over. "Did he catch you?"

Yūga smiled a little. "The idiot held out his hand. Said, 'About time, Commander Sass.'" She snorted. "Cocky moron."

Yūhi nudged her gently. "But a moron who never left."

Yūga's voice cracked ever so slightly. "Yeah… that's the part I don't know what to do with."

Same Time — Neo Alexandria

Lucian leaned his elbows on the windowsill of his apartment, the soft orange lights of the foreign city glowing below like stars trapped in glass.

His phone buzzed beside him. A sleepy voice filled the space.

“I’m still wearing your hoodie, by the way,” Yūhi murmured from across the ocean. “It smells like charcoal and paint.”

Lucian smiled so softly it could’ve melted glass.

“I miss you,” he said without meaning to.

There was a long pause on the call.

“I miss you too,” Yūhi whispered.

His fingers tightened around the phone.

“I’ll come back,” he said. “Soon.”

“You’d better. Or I’m coming there and dragging you back by the collar.”

“Wouldn’t mind that.”

He could hear her laugh.

Jin-hai Rooftop — Under the Stars

Ren tossed a rice cracker up, caught it in his mouth, then turned to Yūga beside him.

“You know, if you weren’t here, I’d have the whole rooftop to myself. I could nap. I could vibe.”

“You'd also be lonely and eat all your snacks in existential silence.”

“Fair point.”

They lay side by side, looking up at the stars. A breeze curled around them.

Ren turned his head.

“You ever think about the first time we met?”

Yūga smirked. “Yeah. I thought you were an escaped cartoon character.”

“Charming.”

“I’m serious. That ridiculous grin? Those neon shoelaces? You looked like a walking chaos mascot.”

“And yet, here you are. Ten months later. Still beside the walking chaos.”

She didn’t respond.

So he leaned closer.

“You like me.”

“Don’t flatter yourself.”

“You love me.”

Yūga scoffed, cheeks pink. “You think just because you have nice eyelashes and remembered my bubble tea order that—"

He gently brushed his pinky finger against hers.

Her words faded.

“Say it,” Ren whispered.

She turned her face toward him. “You really want to hear it?”

“I’ve waited ten months.”

She let out a breath.

“I love you,” she said quietly. “In that stupid, can’t-stand-being-away kind of way. In that way where if I saw you hugging another girl, I’d trip her.”

He laughed softly. “Romantic.”

“Tragically.”

He rolled toward her.

“I love you too, Yūga. In that I-need-you-to-roast-me-daily-or-I’ll-malfunction way. In that your-eyes-are-the-only-home-I-want way.”

Silence.

Then she reached over and flicked his forehead.

“You’re lucky I like dramatic idiots.”

Their laughter tangled in the dark like old music. Their hands found each other without needing permission.

And they lay there — just Ren and Yūga, under a sky that finally felt right again.

Back in the Tachibana Home — Midnight

Yūhi sat in her bed, legs curled, fingers dancing over the keyboard.

Lucian’s message had just come through.

“Can I come home soon?”

Her heart raced.

She typed back:

“I’ve been waiting.”

No hesitation. No drama. Just the truth.

Neo Alexandria — Morning

Lucian traced the edge of the plane ticket with his thumb.
Jin-hai.
It was real now.

He looked at his final sketchbook — the one filled with her.

Then, he closed it gently.

He was going home.

Meanwhile — The Bakery Corner

Yūga and Ren sat in their usual spy corner, sharing a chocolate pastry.

“You still think you’re the better spy?” she asked.

“Absolutely. I’m a master of shadows.”

“You once got caught because your shoelaces lit up in the dark.”

“Details.”

She wiped some chocolate off his cheek. “Hopeless.”

“And yours,” he said, grinning.

She leaned her head on his shoulder.

“You’re mine too.”

And just like that, under flickering fairy lights and fading bakery warmth — a love that had once started in whispers and sarcasm finally settled into something steady.

And across oceans, across time, Lucian’s plane took off.

Back to her.

Back to where his heart had always been.

Chapter 20: When We Finally Bloom

Jin-hai's airport smelled like instant noodles, coffee, and fate.

Yūhi stood in the middle of the arrival gate, wearing her sister's jacket because she was too nervous to pick her own. Her heart was doing parkour in her chest. She wasn't crying. Her eyes just... refused to blink properly.

And then — like a scene from her favorite daydream — he appeared.

Lucian.

Tall. Calm. Holding a sketchbook in one hand and his coat in the other. His eyes scanned the crowd like he wasn't sure this was real — until he saw her.

Then he smiled.

And that was all it took.

Yūhi forgot how to breathe. She ran.

Lucian dropped everything — his bag, sketchbook, probably all sense of logic — and walked fast. Not running. But the kind of walking that said: No more waiting.

When she reached him, she crashed into his chest and threw her arms around his neck.

"I swear, if you don't kiss me in the next three seconds, I'm shoving you back on that plane," she whispered, trembling.

Lucian laughed. "So dramatic—"

Yūhi kissed him hard.

Somewhere, someone clapped. An old woman cheered, "Marry her already!"

Lucian pulled away, dazed. "I told you I'd come back."

"You're late," Yūhi said, burying her face into his hoodie. "I already imagined five future scenarios. You're behind schedule."

He kissed her temple. "Let me catch up."

Meanwhile — On the Rooftop of Chaos

Yūga sat on the rooftop wall, legs swinging over the edge, twirling a lollipop in her mouth like a sarcastic villainess.

Ren flopped beside her, snack bag in hand. “Romeo made it?”

“Yup,” Yūga smirked. “Walked in like a Studio Ghibli character with emotional damage and great lighting.”

Ren grinned. “I bet she kissed him before he even got to speak.”

“She threatened him first. Same thing.”

They chuckled quietly.

The breeze shifted. Softer now.

Ren looked over at her. “You know… this is weird.”

“What is?”

“This whole thing. Us. It’s like…”

He tilted his head thoughtfully. “Like when you send a wrong text to a random number… but end up talking for hours.”

Yūga blinked, then laughed — low and quiet. “Yeah,” she said, tucking her hair behind one ear. “Wrong number. Right feelings.”

Ren stared at her. “You just turned that into a romance novel title.”

“I’m a genius. Obviously.”

He reached for her hand. “Wanna make it official?”

“You mean, like, finally stop flirting around and admit I like you?”

“Yeah. That thing.”

Yūga leaned forward. “Fine. But I’m still gonna call you Agent Noodle.”

Ren laughed. “And I’m still in love with you.”

Yūga kissed him. “Good. Because I’ve been in love with you for a while, Noodlehead.”

Fireworks didn’t go off — but Ren swore the sky got warmer.

Epilogue – Two Years Later

Yūhi & Lucian's Apartment

Lucian held a curtain in one hand and a paintbrush in the other.

"I want blackout. You draw like a vampire," Yūhi argued.

"I need morning light," he insisted. "It's artistic."

"You need sleep," she countered.

He laughed, pulled her onto his lap, and kissed her nose. "You're my best muse."

"You're my walking disaster."

They kissed again — slow and safe and so in love it hurt.

The Spy Café

Yūga smacked Ren with a ladle. "Stop calling it Operation Caffeine."

Ren wore fake sunglasses and an apron. "Every café needs a theme."

"You are the theme," she deadpanned. "The chaos."

He kissed her cheek. "But I'm your chaos."

She leaned into him. "Yeah, yeah. I love you too, dumbass."

"Say it again."

"I love you."

"Again."

“I love you.”

He kissed her — their customers cheered.

The Rooftop

Their old rooftop remained untouched.

Lucian and Yūhi carved their initials into the wall.
Ren spray-painted a tiny pigeon wearing sunglasses.
Yūga added the words:

"Wrong Number. Right Feelings."

They all sat down. Together. Home.

And somewhere in the city, a street performer strummed an old guitar and sang:

“I met her by accident, lost her on purpose,
Then fate threw us into the same storm.
She rolled her eyes, I caught my breath —
And suddenly, everything was warm.”

The End.